

ABSTRACT

A load balancing system and method. In one embodiment, the present invention is directed to a method of operating a data communication network having at least one client server and a plurality of recipient servers. The client and recipient servers exchange data packets. Each of the recipient servers has at least one unique service port number and at least one redirect port number. The method generally comprises providing a data packet configured to include a first data segment indicating a destination port number, a second data segment indicating whether the client server is configured to provide port redirection, and a third data segment that enables the recipient servers to acknowledge that the client server is configured to provide port redirection. A load balancer is provided that is configured for effecting transfer of data packets between the client server and recipient servers. The load balancer examines the data segments in the data packets to determine which of the recipient servers shall receive the data packet and whether the data packets are to be redirected.